

**DEWAYNE WEST, CEM
VICE-CHAIRMAN, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM
COMMISSION
AND DIRECTOR, JOHNSTON COUNTY, N.C., EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

**THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT**

APRIL 14, 2005

Thank you Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member Norton, and distinguished members of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide you with a statement for the record on national preparedness and recent activities related to implementation of homeland security president directives 5 and 8.

I am Dewayne West, vice-chairperson of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) Commission and director of Johnston County, North Carolina, Emergency Management. I also am the current president of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). Today, I am representing the EMAP Commission, which is the governing board of the only national assessment and accreditation process for local and state emergency management. EMAP is a non-profit accrediting body dedicated to the improvement and excellence in public sector emergency management systems throughout the nation.

On behalf of the EMAP Commission, I want to extend our appreciation for the opportunity to be part of the committee's examination of the work done to date on the National Response Plan, National Incident Management System, or NIMS, and the evolving National Preparedness Goal and related materials. Significant work has been undertaken and accomplished in all three of these areas, and we acknowledge the outstanding contributions and commitment of many agencies and individuals in these projects.

While still being implemented, the National Response Plan is a positive step in strengthening coordination of response activities across agencies within the federal government. The need for a more consistent approach to incident management throughout the nation, particularly given that mutual aid and other outside assistance is necessary in a large-scale or high-impact event, requiring enhanced operational interoperability, is addressed in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). While many state and local governments already use an incident management system, EMAP assessments have confirmed the need for greater consistency in use of and terminology in incident management. State and local governments throughout the nation already are moving to become familiar with and to incorporate NIMS in their plans, operational procedures, and training. EMAP is open to working with the NIMS Integration Center (NIC) on how to best evaluate compliance with key NIMS components in the future. However, we see some cause for concern across HSPD-5 and HSPD-8 implementation activities in that there continues to be gaps in coordination across these projects and integration of the core concepts of each with the others. Because assessment, benchmarking, and continuous improvement in

comprehensive preparedness and emergency management are EMAP's focus and mission, my comments will be largely directed toward HSPD-8 implementation activities.

As background, EMAP was first envisioned in the late 1990s when state and local emergency managers, with support from federal partners, identified the need for national standards and a consistent assessment methodology to evaluate, strengthen, and benchmark progress of state and local governments' systems for preparing for and responding to disasters, whether natural or human-caused. EMAP assesses a jurisdiction's system for management and coordination of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities for all hazards. That system encompasses all organizations, agencies, departments, entities, and individuals responsible for emergency management and homeland security.

EMAP uses a tough but scalable set of collaboratively developed national standards, the *EMAP Standard*, which is based on the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs, combined with self-assessment, documentation, and independent peer review to provide a comprehensive assessment of a jurisdiction's activities and capabilities for handling emergencies and disasters. To date, four states are fully accredited: Arizona, the District of Columbia, Florida, and North Dakota. Three additional jurisdictions are conditionally accredited (an interim step toward full accreditation): Jacksonville/Duval County (Fla.), Montana, and Pennsylvania. EMAP has conducted baseline assessments using its national standards in 35 states and territories.

In these comments, I will try to cover three main areas: the HSPD-8 implementation process, substance of the National Preparedness Goal and related documents, and concerns about potential impacts of these initiatives as currently outlined.

First, if the expectation is that the HSPD-8 materials -- the Target Capabilities List, National Preparedness Goal, and planning scenarios -- create or provide a comprehensive assessment of preparedness, then we would say that objective or expectation has not yet been achieved. It is difficult to discern from the materials available as of this date how or whether these documents will be woven together in a way that is useable by the state and local community of emergency managers and responders to provide a comprehensive assessment of preparedness.

Others can better recap the intent and full process associated with HSPD-8 national preparedness initiatives during the past year, and I imagine the members have received briefings from DHS staff. We have had concerns about process, some of it related to the volume of material generated by contractors and then offered for a quick turnaround review to selected state and local representatives. Workshops on target capabilities and critical tasks last fall generated a high degree of frustration among local, state, and federal participants. It seems that DHS has done a good job reshaping and refocusing after those meetings. Admittedly, the deadlines that the department has been asked to meet to create a national preparedness goal and assessment seem to be a source of difficulty. The scope of a national and comprehensive assessment is complex and huge and may not be one that can be rationally designed and implemented in the manner it was approached within a year and a half.

However, rather than process, I would like to focus on content and potential impact of the National Preparedness Goal and Target Capabilities List (TCL) and urge you to identify the objective and seek ways to ensure that proposed solutions support progress toward that objective in balance with the burden they will impose on your constituents at the local and state level.

The objective of these activities, as described in HSPD-8, is “to help ensure the preparedness of the nation to prevent, respond to, and recover from threatened and actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies....” There are several points at which we are concerned that HSPD-8 implementation activities so far appear to assume a start-from-scratch approach to preparedness. There are multitudes of state and local plans, procedures, and programs. As we have sought to communicate to our colleagues at DHS, the objective should not be -- in fact, from a resource standpoint, cannot be -- to recreate all of them.

The capabilities-based planning approach employed by DHS has used 15 catastrophic disaster scenarios created by the department and/or its contractors. Two of the 15 involve natural disasters; the others are human-caused involving various chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive incidents of large magnitude. These scenarios can be extremely useful in determining resource, planning, exercise and training, and procedures needs for catastrophic disasters. The foundation for preparedness must also be assessed and strengthened, however. A strong foundation that includes hazard identification and a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency approach to resource management, planning, communications, training, exercising and public education and information must be supported and strengthened to meet the needs of our communities. This foundation is put into use whether the community experiences spring flooding or a radiological dispersal device at a major sporting event, and it is these foundational capabilities that are evaluated through the EMAP standards and process.

There is concern in the emergency management community that focus on catastrophic scenarios only will replace focus on what is likely to happen in a given local jurisdiction and could frustrate local planners, responders, and leaders because of the daunting scale. As you know, state and local jurisdictions are regularly expected to respond quickly to changes in federal funding programs and initiatives. For example, state and local jurisdictions currently are trying to determine modifications that will be required to comply with NIMS. The fact that the federal government has combined numerous federal agencies into the U.S. Department of Homeland Security may allow for a misconception that I want to note, although I am sure you realize it from experience with your state and local leaders. At the local and state level, while there are departments and individuals who perform the functions associated with prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and there may even be new offices or a few new positions labeled “homeland security”, there is no substantial new bureaucracy available to handle the increased workload and requirements of evolving and demanding federal homeland security initiatives. These are, by and large, the same people and the same offices, retasked and/or multi-tasking, as those responsible for emergency management, law enforcement, public safety, or emergency response. Offices or directors of homeland security at the state and local level often have few staff and possibly retain responsibilities they held before the responsibilities of “homeland security” were conferred on them. This is not necessarily inappropriate; however, we ask that this reality be understood as you seek to improve preparedness in a way that builds on existing capabilities -- filling gaps and refining and strengthening systems rather than creating a host of new requirements or “reinventing the wheel”. We are concerned that promulgation of HSPD-8 compliance requirements will occur before the potential for duplication, dilution, and other potential impacts on existing state and local practices and plans has been fully considered.

EMAP’s commission, volunteer assessors, and state and local users understand and support the need for stronger and better coordinated prevention, preparedness and response capabilities. Recognition of that need was the reason EMAP was created; it was of course made more urgent by the events of September 11, 2001. To strengthen preparedness, EMAP urges our federal partners to look for efficient and effective ways to strengthen the overall system for handling disasters and to address gaps in capabilities. Clarification of the intended use of the preparedness

goal and TCL is needed before they are tied to grant funding to help minimize the implication these materials require wholesale rewrites of extensive and interrelated state and local plans and procedures throughout the nation. Focus on improving capabilities in areas directly impacting the stated national priorities could provide a manageable means of applying the target capabilities in a way that will have immediate positive effects on critical gaps while avoiding duplication with existing planning, training, and assessment activities.

Without careful clarification, it would seem that work toward compliance with existing national standards is likely to be supplanted by measurement against target capabilities, which are as yet still being refined. Existing standards would be supplanted not necessarily because of the proven value or meaning of the TCL but because the new measures will be required to receive homeland security grant funds. While the National Preparedness Goal makes reference to use of existing standards, it is as yet unclear how existing consensus-based standards will be integrated into any new national preparedness assessment methodology. We note that OMB Circular A-119, on Federal Participation in Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and Conformity Assessment Activities, notes a preference for use of existing standards. Our concern is that the expectation for wholesale use of metrics based on the TCL will conflict with state and local governments' use of existing standards. This would cause uncertainty and distract emergency management throughout the nation from ongoing work to improve disaster preparedness/management capabilities and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary coordination.

We believe that the TCL can be beneficial if used narrowly to identify gaps in capabilities through exercises; however, we assert that blanket use of the TCL as compliance metrics for receipt of federal funds would be misguided at present. We ask that you and our federal agency partners consider focusing initially on the seven national priorities outlined in the National Preparedness Goal and encourage state and local governments to evaluate their activities and capabilities in these areas, which DHS has identified as gaps or urgent needs. The target capabilities and critical task materials generated in this project can be good tools for exercising and training to build strong capabilities and better plans in these areas, as we have suggested to DHS staff.

I also encourage you to assure DHS that it does not have to create an entirely new preparedness assessment methodology but that it can and should build upon existing standards and assessment methodologies, such as those used and applied by EMAP for the past four years to assess emergency management and preparedness programs across the nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to talk with you and for your help in building stronger preparedness across the nation.